The Southern PATRIOT

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WASHINGTON Is Saying
By Elizabeth Allen

The Dumbarton Oaks Conference overshadows all domestic and foreign news. The thought of those great nations meeting together in unity and trying to make a plan to keep the peace of the world is breath-taking in its immensity! Even as the war is ending in such success for the United Nations, the thought is ever present of the dreadful destruction and suffering that it has brought to the peoples of the world. In every living soul there is a longing for permanent peace—but the path between the wish and the reality is long and dangerous.

Already there is forming an opposition, faint now but capable of immense damage. The same methods used twenty-five years ago against the League of Nations—sniping and piecemeal sabotage—are being used today by a group in the Senate which, according to Thomas L. Stokes, is "largely Republican with some stray Democrats." Also the professional enemies of Russia are emerging to join the attack, led by William C. Bullitt. Watch the Senate. Since it must ratify a treaty providing the necessary peace machinery, there the real fight will occur.

* * *

On the domestic front the battle of reconversion is still going strong. The injustice and futility of the George Bill is made worse in the House version. After having taken care to protect the Corporations in every possible way for two years after the war is over, Congress balks at giving the men and women that have been responsible for our victory the most minimum protection.

It is interesting to read the debate in Congress where the old arguments that have been used since the Beginning of Time are still dragged out—"men and women are lazy, trifling, don't want to work . . . will sit and rock away their lives if you give them a chance." The fact that the Kilgore Bill expressly states that if a man or woman refuses work their benefits are cut off, is ignored.

I regret to say that most of this type of thinking comes out of the South. The Republicans by their votes evidently agree with it, but they pussyfoot more in saying it. This battle is not over. It can be won if the people speak—if they vote out the men who hold such backward views.

LONE STAR DEMOCRATS WIN AGAINST VOTE STEAL CLIQUE

by John Reeves

Fighting Texas Democrats have regained control of their Party from the Roosevelt-hating cabal of high-handed politicians, who had hoped to trick the great majority of Texans out of their votes in November.

Rising in wrath at their Dallas State Convention in mid-September, the people of Texas sent down to bitter defeat the clique of electors led by Eugene B. Germany, who announced they would support Senator Byrd over Roosevelt, regardless of the popular Texas vote in November.

The convention:

—howled down Martin Dies, who tried unsuccessfully to address it;

—clinched Texas' electoral votes for Roosevelt by disqualifying the "uninstructed" electors;

—outwitted fence-straddling Gov. Coke Stevenson's legally untenable proposal to have two rival sets of Democratic electors printed on the November ballot.

Another Victory!

Administering the final blow to the vote steal clique, the Texas Supreme Court has just ruled that the pro-Roosevelt slate of electors chosen by the September convention shall be printed on the November ballot!

Thus the entire action of the May convention, dominated by Chairman George Butler, Jesse Jones' nephew, was decisively repudiated. At Dallas, Congress Wright Patman was named chairman of the committee to name new electors and R. W. Calvert, former speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, was named temporary convention chairman.

Though the September convention customarily follows the wishes of the Democratic nominee for Governor in regard to the platform and selection of party leaders, the Dallas convention swept on and named their own candidates. A new full-time office of Director of Education and Organization was created, and is to be filled by Mrs. Alfred Taylor, leader of the "bolt" of pro-Roosevelt delegates in May.

In its general purge, the Roosevelt forces have restored the balance of national and state emphasis within the party ranks, and have smoked out from its ranks those dangerous elements within the party, who plotted to get Mississippi and Louisiana electors to join forces to secure a balance of power

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Army Affirms Order Against Segregation

"Men who are fulfilling the same obligation, suffering the same dislocation of their private lives and wearing the identical uniform should have the same privileges for rest and relaxation," said Acting Secretary of War Robert Patterson, reaffirming the Army order ending segregation in Army post exchanges, buses and theatres.

The statement was made in a letter to Governor Chauncey Sparks of Alabama, who had protested to the President that the Order would lead to "terror, bloodshed and calamity." The Governor's charge is not, however, borne out in fact, since the Order, issued July 8, 1944, had already been in peaceful effect for over six weeks before he discovered it.

Answer Gov. Sparks

The Governor's claim that both Negro and white citizens of the South agree to segregation as an acceptable custom to preserve race harmony was answered by the Birmingham Baptist Ministers Conference who declared:

"As Negroes, we believe in our democratic form of government and we believe that true democracy should work throughout America for all people, and therefore, we emphatically deny the statement made by anybody, anywhere, at any time, that we are satisfied with the evils of segregation."

The Order sets forth as Army policy that:

"All personnel, regardless of race, shall be afforded equal opportunity to enjoy recreational facilities on each post, camp and station. . . .

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TRENDS

The Attorney Generals of ten Southern states met in Memphis, Tennessee, early in September, and spent most of their time discussing the "problem" created by the Supreme Court's decision outlawing the white primary.

According to newspaper reports, Chairman J. T. Watson of Florida described the race issue as "the real hot potato of the meeting," and Attorney General Williams of Arkansas led the demand for continuation of white supremacy. The attorney generals compared notes on their methods of evading the intent of the Court's decision:

—South Carolina's method was to repeal all its laws referring to party primaries, thus leaving no statutes for the Supreme Court to declare invalid. "Clubs" and groups have supplanted the old party organization.

—Arkansas representatives recommended that the word "white" be deleted from the laws and that qualification for voting be based on "loyalty" to the Democratic Party, leaving to the election judges the right to challenge party loyalty.

Other subjects discussed by the Southern Region of the National Association of Attorney Generals were:

Labor relations and the necessity for control and regulation of labor unions by the states; federal ownership of great areas of southern land with consequent loss of tax revenue to states and counties; and the possibility of federal supervision of the insurance industry, which might result in loss of tax revenues by the Southern states.

Chairman Watson stated: "I would rather sink into political oblivion for the rest of my life than to see the principles and philosophies of the closed shop prevail in this country."

* * *

Research laboratories could speed the progress of the South, said T. W. Martin, President of the Southern Research Institute, and President of the Alabama Power Co. He pointed out to Birmingham industrial leaders that a 1939 survey showed that of the 40,000 industrial research workers in the country, only 2.2 percent are in the South.

* * *

A Milledgeville, Georgia, ordinance which attempted to outlaw union organizers has been declared unconstitutional by Judge George S. Carpenter of the Superior Court, Ocmulgee Circuit. The outrageous city ordinance required that union organizers be local residents for one year and pay a $5,000 license fee. It was not difficult for Judge Carpenter to find reasons for its unconstitutality.

Lame Duck Dies Feathers Nest In Washington, Lays Egg At Home

Drew Pearson reveals that: Martin Dies has put his 11-year old son on the Congressional payroll as an office clerk at a salary of $2,400, plus 15% for overtime. Though his son Robert is in school in Missouri, he draws this salary just the same. In addition, Mrs. Dies is on her husband's Congressional payroll to the tune of $3,900 plus 15% for overtime. She too has been absent from Washington for many months.

But our favorite comment on the Congressman comes from the *Nashville Tennessean's* editorial columns:

"The Baltimore Sun's *special correspondent in Dallas reports a poignant moment as the rank and file of Texas Democrats recaptured the party machinery this week. It came when, in a final effort of the Tory group to save something, George Butler, state chairman soon-to-be-ousted, sent Martin Dies to the microphone.*

"For three minutes the great inquisitor of the discredited house committee, once the darling of every Roosevelt-hater in America, matinee-idol of the lecture stand and favorite writer of the bitter magazines, waited with fists uplifted—before wilting under the boos of his fellow Texans.

"It has been said by the fans of Mr. Dies that the criticisms directed upon him in the national scene reflected the "rage of the Reds." The record now has the judgment upon Mr. Dies by his neighbors."

The Southern Jurisdictional Conference of the Methodist Church has set up a Commission on Interracial Action "charged with the responsibility of creating and executing a program of action which will have as its purpose the elimination of all racial injustices." Say the Southeastern Jurisdictional Bishops:

"Always holding before us the ideal, we must move with unlagging footsteps and courageous faith to implement progressively into our social and economic which belong equally to men because life those privileges and responsibilities they are children of God and which must not be denied to any man because of the accident of birth or color. If we are to achieve here a civilization of prosperity and happiness it cannot rest upon a basis of supremacy and subservience, of superiority and inferiority, of education and illiteracy, of financial privilege and economic bankruptcy."

* * *

North Carolina is the first state in the South to pay equal salaries for white and Negro teachers, effective with the new school year now opening. The average salary paid to teachers in the state has doubled in the 10-year period, 1934-1944.

* * *

George L. Googe, Southern representative of the American Federation of Labor, hit the nail on the head in his Labor Day speech, when he declared:

"We prepare for the Labor Days of the future when Southern labor shall have wiped out all discriminations against the South and the injustices to the workers of the South, when the wage earners throughout America shall be treated industrially and economically with equal justice, and an abundant life shall be equitably distributed among all those willing and able to work in this country without regard to geographic location."

Support for poll tax repeal has come from a very unexpected quarter—from Virginia Congressman Clifford A. Woodrum.

"Whatever may have been said in justification of the poll tax when it was written into our state law, so far as I can observe, it serves no useful purpose now," he says. "It is, on the other hand a definite cause of political irritation. It is outmoded and in disrepute, and we might as well be realistic about it."

Of course, Woodrum addressed his appeal to the State Legislature rather than Congress. But be cheered by his prediction that "We may expect in the next Congress a renewed drive that will probably put the law on the statute books. In all probability it would be held constitutional by the Supreme Court."

* * *

Texas Democrats

(Continued from Page 1.)

whereby they could wangle political patronage from both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Already the defeated politicians are maneuvering to evade the mandate of the Convention. Secretary of State Sidney Latham has refused to print the new slate of electors on the Ballot, and the new Democratic Executive Committee is preparing to challenge his decision before the State Supreme Court. The only legal question involved is whether the September Convention had the power to reverse the action taken by the May convention.

Two spearheads in the journalistic field are pushing the smear campaign —the *W. Lee O'Daniels News* and the *Southern Weekly*. Watch for an expose of these two publications in the October issue of the PATRIOT.

Don't Boycott The Democracy Our Boys Fight For —VOTE—

The November elections are critical. Your vote counts.

We reprint the voting laws in the various Southern states, where there is yet time for you to register. If you live in one of these states and have not yet registered to vote, REGISTER NOW.

Alabama

Registration: Check with the Board of Registrars of your home county for dates, as they vary throughout the state. You must register in person. Registration is permanent.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to Judge of Probate of the county in which you vote. Completed ballot to be in his hands not earlier than twenty days before or later than election day.

Poll Tax: $1.50 a year, cumulative. Too late to be paid for November elections.

Arkansas

Registration: Not required.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to the county clerk of your home county any time up to 10 days before election. Completed ballot to be in hands of county clerk on or before election day.

Poll Tax: $1 a year, not cumulative.

Florida

Registration: The registration laws are not uniform throughout the state. Write the supervisor of registration of your county or town for information. If you have ever registered, it may not be necessary for you to register again.

Absentee voting: None, except for armed forces.

Georgia

Registration: Too late.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to registrar of home county by registered mail, enclosing return postage.

Poll Tax: $1 a year, cumulative.

Kentucky

Registration: Too late.

Absentee voting: No provision.

Louisiana

Registration: In person with local parish officials, any time up to 30 days before election. Registration required every four years. At time you vote, you must have your registration certificate with you.

Absentee voting: None, except armed forces.

Mississippi

Registration: Too late.

Absentee voting: None, except armed forces.

Poll Tax: $2 a year, cumulative for two years.

North Carolina

Registration: Up to October 14 for general election, with Chairman of Board of Elections of your home county. You may also register between October 14 and November 4, with registrar in your home precinct.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to Chairman of the Board of Elections of your home county. Completed ballot must be received by the Board at least 2 days before election.

Oklahoma

Registration: In person before registrar in your home precinct from October 18 to October 27.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to Secretary of County Election Board of your home county. Completed ballot must be taken to the polls on election day by someone in your home precinct.

South Carolina

Registration: In person with clerk of home county or city 30 days prior to election.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to the secretary of your local voting precinct, enclosing sufficient postage for registry of the ballot to you. Completed ballot must be returned by registered mail to reach your home precinct at least three days before election.

Poll Tax: $1. Penalties imposed after January 1 (approximately 1% for each month). Women are not liable for poll tax.

Attention Serviceemen

If you have applied to your state for an absentee ballot and have not received it by October 1, and if you come from: Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Oklahoma or Texas, you may use a Federal Ballot. Get it from your Commanding Officer or Voting Officer.

We do not include here information on registration and state ballots, since the time is already too short.

Tennessee

Registration: October 16, 17 and 18, either in person or by mail.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to the chairman of your own political party, giving registration certificate number and poll tax receipt number, enclosing sufficient postage for return to you by registered mail. Completed ballot must reach election officials on or before election day.

Poll Tax: $2. Too late to be paid for November elections.

Texas

Registration: None required.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to clerk of your home county 20 to 30 days before each election, enclosing receipt for poll tax or exemption certificate, and 15 cents postage. Completed ballot must be recived by clerk or recorder so that it can be turned over to the election judge on or before election day .

Poll Tax: $1.75. Too late to be paid for November elections.

Virginia

Registration: In person any time up to primary day or 30 days before November election, with registrar of home precinct, except Roanoke or Lynchburg, where there is one central registration point.

Absentee voting: Apply for ballot to registrar of home precinct, enclosing sufficient postage for registered mail, not more than 60 days nor less than 5 days before election. Completed ballot must be returned to registrar by registered mail so as to be received by him at least 3 days before election.

Poll Tax: $1.50. Too late to be paid for November elections.

Congratulations to the Orleans Parish Political Action Committee for its efforts in adding 1,021 new voters to the registration lists.

New Orleans is the first city in the Southeast to get started with systematic city-wide organization of the labor and progressive vote, according to George Mitchell, Southern Director of the Political Action Committee.

WASHINGTON Is Saying
By Elizabeth Allen

(Continued from Page 1.)

For Farmers or Corporations

The importance of the South is once more demonstrated by the fact that the Subcommittee on Agriculture in the House has appointed Pace of Georgia as its head to draw up a plan for post-war agriculture. Will he represent the plantation owners or the great majority of people in the country? By his past record it would seem that he will be the tool of the landlords of Georgia whose latest plan advocated by Calloway of LaFayette, Georgia, calls for the banks and business men of southern communities to form corporations to buy up farms and hire people to run them. In other words, they want to reduce farmers to hired hands instead of trying to help them become independent landowners.

Proud of Sen. Pepper

As long as the Southern people don't vote, they can expect their so-called representatives to reflect the interests of the small minority at the top. It is a source of pride to the Southerners in Washington that we have one man who consistently fights for the rights of the great mass of Southern people—Claude Pepper of Florida—who comes from a state that has abolished the poll tax. He is considering introducing a new bill in the forthcoming Congress to outlaw the poll tax, and we urge all Southerners who believe in the right of a free vote to write him, care of Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C., urging him to introduce an anti-poll-tax bill the first day Congress opens.

ARMY ORDER

(Continued from Page 1.)

". . . No exchange will be designated for the exclusive use of any particular race. . . . Personnel will be permitted to use any exchange on the post.

". . . **Busses, trucks or other transportation owned and operated by the Government . . . will be available to all military personnel, regardless of race. Restricting personnel to certain sections of such transportation because of race will not be permitted either on or off a post, regardless of local civilian custom.**

". . . No theatres or performance in any theatre will be denied any group or individual because of race."

Letters To The PATRIOT

These columns are open to expressions of opinion from all Southerners and all those concerned with the problems of the South. We are very interested in receiving news of interest to PATRIOT *readers that can come only from individuals like our readers—"news you don't get" in the regular Southern press, as well as your reaction to the articles, news and letters we print.*

September 5, 1944.

Sir:

I have written the following letter to the President and think you will be interested in it:

Dear Mr. President:

This letter is a plea to the administration not to revoke the recent decision of the War Department to end racial segregation in Army posts, buses, and movies.

The order has excited protest from some Southern politicians and demagogues; however, anti-discrimination forces in the rest of the nation have always underestimated the strength of liberal Southerners (e.g., the victory of liberal Southerners in recent primaries and the retirement of Senator Reynolds and Representative Dies). There are thousands of Southerners who have applauded the Army decision to make this most rudimentary step in more democratic race relations in Army camps.

We would welcome further steps. The War Department still has not given the public a good reason why an experimental unit of Negro and white troops —completely voluntary—could not be set up. It would be an experiment in democracy and certainly could antagonize no one except a few psychopathic individuals suffering from negrophobia.

As a young man (18) waiting to be called into the services (Cadet-Midshipman, M. M. R., U. S. N. R., awaiting assignment), I call on the nation's leadership to maintain this simple contribution to democracy. Let the Army order stand!

Yours very sincerely,
S. W. SANDERS,
Franklin, N. C.

* * *

September 10, 1944.

Sir:

I have been interested in your two articles on the Liberal Editors of the South, and thought you might like this information on the Mississippi press.

The Tupelo Journal is one of the most liberal dailies in the lower South. With more subscribers than there are people in the town, it shows that liberal journalism is in demand. In ten years it has grown from a weekly with 1,000 subscribers to a daily with 9,000 dominating the heaviest voting area of the state. George McLean, the editor, was dismissed from Southwestern as a radical for criticizing the Crump administration. He took the side of labor in the Tupelo strike and was almost run out of town. Since then he has maintained a liberal, pro-labor, New deal outlook. McLean is one of the state FSA committee. He provides more foreign news than the Commercial Appeal and has for years exposed Nazism and appeasement. He is at present in the Navy, but runs it by remote control. He has had able assistants.

The Aberdeen Examiner was the first paper in the nation to come out for a third term and then for a fourth term. Editor Harold Sanders fears only God and he has maintained a strong FDR attitude in home and foreign affairs. His liberalism is also shown by the Examiner's carrying for over a decade my weekly social sermon and a belligerent and critical news column.

The editorials of Henry Minor in the Macon Beacon are a powerful force for democracy by a Democrat nationally famous under Wilson, author of a History of the Democratic Party, and at sixty unreconstructedly New Deal.

Ned Lee, in the Webster Progress, has been a consistent fighter for the people for a generation, and sharply criticizes the corporation press.

Curtis Mullen of the Oxford Eagle is a liberal who is not afraid to defend labor.

All of these papers have criticized and opposed the electoral college steal.

CHARLES G. HAMILTON,
Aberdeen, Miss.

* * *

Lt. Bernard (Buck) Borah, one of the South's oustanding trade union leaders, died in the Army hospital at Kirtland Field, New Mexico, on August 29.

Borah graduated from the University of Tennessee and worked in the research department of the T.V.A., there becoming active in the labor movement for the first time—in the United Federal Workers of America (CIO). He became Southern Director of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and later of the United Gas, Coke and Chemical Workers. He went into the Army as a volunteer officer candidate in 1942.

His loss will be felt not only by his many friends and colleagues throughout the South, but by the Southern progressive movement as a whole.

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THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE FOR HUMAN WELFARE

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Up Stream

By AUBREY WILLIAMS

(We reprint from the National Union Farmer parts of a column by Aubrey Williams, Alabamian, former head of the National Youth Administration, now in charge of organization in the South and East for the National Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union.)

I have just made a trip through the South. There is something happening down there—something more than the growing of a bumper crop of cotton, though they will have that, too.

There seems to be a bottom-deep awakening, a breaking up of the thick shell that has for decades covered the South; a stirring, or to use a good Southern term of 50 years ago, a refreshing. This is what they used to call what went on in religious revivals.

An unmistakable assertion of decency, and a turning on people who live by exploiting race hatred, religious bigotry, by trading in people's prejudices and fears, is happening in the South today, more than anywhere else in the nation.

Possibly it needs to happen there more than anywhere else—but it is happening, and that is the important thing.

★ ★ ★

A big part of this upsurge is taking place at the ballot box. Southern voters have done a magnificent job in retiring such bitter and dangerous men as Martin Dies, Joe Starnes and "Cotton Ed" Smith.

These men are singularly similar in character and conduct. All three appealed to voters' lowest and ugliest selves—hatred of one's fellow man—denunciation of all men who sought to make a better world for all. All three got where they were through cheap and blatant demagogy of the crudest sort. And it was significant that voters saw this and repudiated it. The lines were clearly drawn, and decency won.

Voters, too, picked other men whose "record is one of decency, tolerance and an interest in the welfare of all, not just a few."

★ ★ ★

There is good reason to believe that this is only the beginning, from such things as a recent meeting of an A. F. of L. Plasterers' Union in Mississippi. There were some 50 people present, both white and colored. The president was a colored man, the vice-president was white. It all seemed the most natural thing in the world.

Another was an election in a Georgia war plant. There were several thousand whites and a few thousand Negro employes. The issue turned on whether the Negroes were to be allowed to join the union.

If one union were named to represent the workers the Negroes would be allowed to join; if the other union, Negroes would not be allowed to join.

The union which insisted that Negroes be included, won by a wide margin—and what is more significant, would have won even if the white workers only, had been allowed to vote—and most of these white workers come from the red dirt families of North Georgia.

★ ★ ★

Still a third is the widespread repudiation of the Roosevelt-hating political clique who set themselves up as the self-appointed spokesmen of the voters of the South. If these self-styled leaders ever entertained any real expectations of carrying the rank and file of Southern voters with them, they must know now that they have failed dismally. Even a southern press and radio, subservient always to these throwbacks, to a feudal order, is now telling them that the people have not gone along with them.

★ ★ ★

Soldiers Deserve Democracy

We welcome the U. S. Army order ending segregation in Army post exchanges, theatres and transportation facilities, because racial discrimination in the Armed Forces has interfered with the efficiency of our war effort through requiring duplicate facilities, and has undermined morale and full unity of the American people and our allies, in a manner wholly inconsistent with the best traditions of American democracy and the high objectives for which this war is being fought.

Much significant progress has been made during the war in this field. New branches of the armed forces and auxiliary services have been opened to Negroes; more Negro units have been given opportunities to engage in front line services, more commissions have been given to members of minority groups, and segregation has been broken down in officers training programs, even in the deep South. In each case, the war effort has benefitted thereby.

We hope this order will be followed by others, so that no soldier or sailor in the uniform of the United States should be required to suffer the humiliation of discrimination and segregation because of race.

White Foam Breaking

Reprinted From THE NEW REPUBLIC

Hearing that he is dead
all I can think of
is the white foam breaking
over the spillway
and the lights in the hills

Who are these boys and girls reading by these lights
what lessons are they studying?

After forty years in the Congress of the United States
George Norris died simply a citizen
and in the Senate seat
which he had made more feared by the strong few
more loved by the weak many
than ever a Senate seat before
sat a small-town undertaker
destroying his work like a weevil in the good wheat

Nebraska
thanks for forty years of George Norris
who nourished the spirit of all this land
as your wheat the growing bodies of our children
How you must feel today
Nebraska
we know
who have also struck down blindly
the ones who loved us
and when it was too late
repented

Nebraska your treeless earth
spreads level to the sky's edge
your golden grain upturned to the sun and the blue
it's a long, long way from here
to Tennessee's hills
the rain-blackened cabins in the coves
the thin corn clinging to the slopes
the haggard children
the white water of the rushing streams

What is Tennessee to us?
you said
We want a man who will work for Nebraska
first last and all the time

George Norris grew too big for you
Nebraska
Your great plains bred a vision
vast as themselves and as bountiful

The hills and the plains
are one earth
George Norris saw
and the people of both
one nation indivisible

Omaha Lincoln McCook and Grand Forks
the neighbor up the block
or beside the windmill whirling on the far horizon
are Nebraska you said
and when the Sheriff came to seize Jim's farm
you grabbed the pitchfork and went over

But when the people of Prague
of Warsaw Paris Athens Kharkov
wept in the streets as the hobnails rang on their cobbles
George Norris grabbed his pitchfork

Perhaps you understand him better
Nebraska
now that the neighbor up the block
or beside the windmill whirling on the far horizon
has a gold star in his parlor window

I intend to do as much as I can . . .
George Norris said
the old man of 83
with the young heart
You tried to break it Nebraska
but it was too big for you
you were in it
but it had room for all the rest of us besides

He is gone
the simple citizen who marched at the head of us
but the march goes on
gathering the people from every street
every house that we pass
from the churches and colleges
from the farms and factories
from the tall buildings of cities
from ships in the harbors
from the plains and the hills

We march toward that America
which sleeps in the seeds he planted and others before him
as sure to grow
as wheat on Nebraska plains

He is dead
but the white foam breaks
over the spillway
and the lights in the hills
come on

JOHN BEECHER

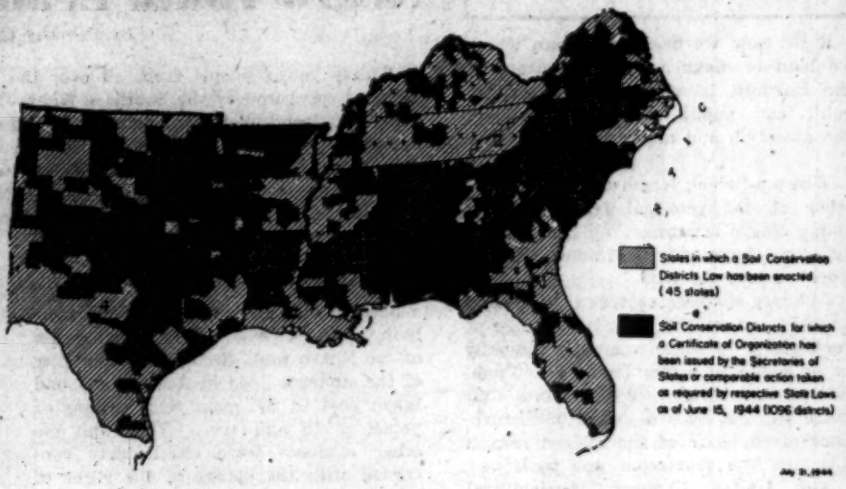
John Beecher was raised in Birmingham and graduated from the University of Alabama. He was an administrator for various New Deal programs all over the South and later worked as an editorial writer on the Birmingham Age-Herald and News. For the past 15 months he has been serving in the merchant marine and is now on the staff of the National Citizens Political Action Committee.

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOIL IS "SICK"

Farmers with sick acres can call on a "land doctor" for help in nearly any part of the South.

Sick land is usually land suffering from gullies or some other form of erosion.

Where erosion is a problem, a "land doctor" is a soil conservation technician. If called on, he can tell a farmer how to stop erosion that has started on his land, and how to prevent further wear and tear on the land. If the farmer wishes, the "land doctor" will help him replan his entire farm so that he can get the most and best crops off it without injury to the land. The "land doctor" knows that the farmer is not likely to be interested in conservation unless he can make a living on the soil.


States in which a Soil Conservation Districts Law has been enacted (45 states)
Soil Conservation Districts for which a Certificate of Organization has been issued by the Secretaries of States or comparable action taken as required by respective State Laws as of June 15, 1944 (1096 districts)

Soil Conservation Districts in Southeast

Production Jumps

Wide surveys conducted among Southern farmers who have tried soil conservation practices, as recommended by Soil Conservation Service technicians, show that on the average the farmers have increased their production per acre of cotton, corn, and tobacco, as well as other crops, by more than ⅓ each. While these farmers have been saving their soil, they have been making better incomes with less drudgery.

Soil conservation technicians work only in the communities where farmers have organized soil conservation districts, and soil conservation districts can be set up only in States which have passed soil conservation district laws. Fortunately every Southern state has passed such a law, as have 45 of the 48 states in the Union.

South Largely Organized

The entire states of South Carolina and Alabama have been organized into Soil Conservation Districts. With the exception of Tennessee, Kentucky and Florida, the greater part of every Southern state has been organized into soil conservation districts. By looking at the Soil Conservation Service map on this page you can see whether you now live in a soil conservation district.

If you do live in a soil conservation district and want to get the services of a "land doctor," your task is comparatively simple. All you have to do is to stop in at the local office of the Soil Conservation Service, or get in touch with the Chairman of the District Board of Supervisors. For example, if you live in Jefferson County, Alabama, you would drop a note to J. R. Howard, Chairman, Jefferson Soil Conservation District, Route 8, Birmingham, or you would stop in at the office of A. L. Howell, District Conservationist, Birmingham.

If you do not live in a soil conservation district that has already been formed, you may help start a soil conservation district. The first step is a petition to the State Conservation Committee signed by 25 or more of the farmers in the proposed district. In Tennessee such a petition would go to W. M. Hardy, State Conservationist, Nashville. Then the State Committee holds a local hearing to determine if there is sufficient interest to organize a district. If favorable interest is shown, a referendum is held, and if there is a favorable vote of the majority of landowners and operators, a district is formed.

May Request Expert

To administer the program of the district, two supervisors are appointed by the State Committee, and three are elected by a majority vote of the district area. These men set up the conservation goals for the district. They may also request the Soil Conservation Service to put a technician in the district to help farmers plan their farms better.

Usually when a farmer calls on the district to help him draw up a plan for his farm, he signs a contract promising to follow the recommendations of the technician. The "land doctor" goes over his land with him, measures the soil on different parts of the farm, determines the "land use capability," and generally an aerial map of the farm is procured. In the planning, the farmer is given an opportunity to decide what kind of crops he wants to raise, whether for example he wants to raise livestock primarily, or various crops. After the plan is made, the technician will show the farmer how to stake out terraces, lay out waterways, run contour lines, and perform the other techniques essential to conservation. He tells him which practices he can receive payments for from the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. From year to year he goes back to visit with the farmer to see how he is carrying out his part of the contract. Usually it takes about four years to carry out a plan.

War Speeds Program

The increased interest in the production of food with the beginning of the war in Europe accelerated the movement for soil conservation. In the single year of 1940 the number of acres planned by soil conservation technicians tripled as compared with 1939. Since Pearl Harbor, the strain on manpower and machinery has been great, and the rate of increase has fallen off, but each year the number of farms planned has been greater than the year before. In addition to the farmers who have had their farms planned, many others have received information from local leaders on simple practices that would help increase productivity of food and fibre beneficial to the war effort.